



Introduction

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South Waikato District Council has compiled the State of the Environment (SOE) Report 2006, to inform the community of the current effectiveness of its Plans and Policies, in managing the District's natural and physical resources. The SOE Report provides the opportunity for Council, the community, businesses, industries and other agencies to assess its performance in how well it is meeting its statutory obligations under the RMA, and to assess the effectiveness of its environmental goals and policies.

This Report uses key indicators to highlight and establish environmental trends within the communities and raise awareness of current and future issues affecting the state of the District's

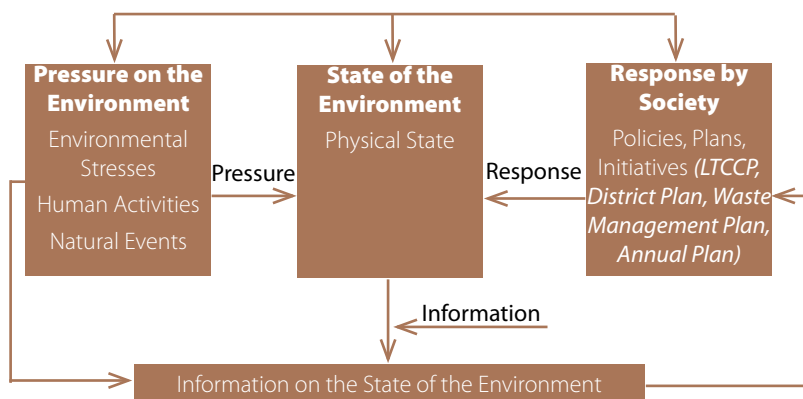
environment. A selection of indicators has been chosen to be relevant to the local area and also to enable integrated data gathering from regional and national agencies.

Where possible, information from each indicator is stored as a layer of information on a map, known as a Geographical Information System (GIS). By comparing a series of points in time, trends or cycles may become evident.

The previous SOE Report 2003 established much of the baseline data from which this SOE Report 2006 builds. Trends shown in this Report assist Council in developing better policy and plans to address key environmental issues that face the District.

Links to Other Plans/Policies

Pressure/State/Response Model



South Waikato District Council has a number of planning and policy documents that form an important linkage into the SOE Report, ensuring that SOE reporting and monitoring framework does not exist in isolation.

Policy and planning documents from organisations such as Environment Waikato, Ministry for the Environment, neighbouring Councils, Department of Conservation and Transit New Zealand, shape specific areas with Council Policy that are important in achieving sustainable development. The SOE Report links with these documents to provide measures of the District's sustainability.

Council's Long Term Council Community Plan (Long Term Plan 2006-16) provides a platform to achieve the "community aspirations" of social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of life within the South Waikato. The State of Environment Report helps monitor progress towards environmental wellbeing, as described in the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002. This also contributes to measuring progress towards achieving South Waikato's Community Outcomes, specifically *A Better Environment for our Children*.

Outcomes presented enable Policies and Plans to respond to the changes in environmental quality, providing direct linkage to environmental stresses and community activities taking place.

The Pressure State Response framework used to present environmental information in this report is represented in the diagram opposite.

Environmental Outcomes

Environmental Outcomes are an important component of South Waikato's Community Outcomes, which are statements of community goals or visions for the future of the District. Indicators in the SOE Report contribute to measuring South Waikato's Community Outcomes in a creditable manner, to help Council and the community plan and develop future policy.

Key Environmental Outcomes identified through consultation with South Waikato communities include:

Code *	Community Outcome
CO1.6	South Waikato has quality infrastructure to support communities and businesses.
CO3.2	Air quality and health are improved through better insulated homes and clean burning.
CO3.8	People are safe at home and in the community.
CO4.1	South Waikato has attractive urban areas, open spaces and private properties that people take pride in.
CO4.3	The District's urban environments are kept clean and tidy and there is a widespread culture of respect for our communities and identity.
CO5.1	The quality of the District's natural environment is monitored, protected and maintained, and people are encouraged to respect and understand their environment.
CO5.2	Māori stewardship of the District's environment is acknowledged and Māori are actively involved in planning and managing natural resources.

Code *	Community Outcome
CO5.3	Young people are actively involved in caring for their environment.
CO5.4	The District's waterways and sensitive areas are monitored and protected.
CO5.5	Community waste is disposed of with minimal impact on the environment, and people are encouraged to recycle and reduce waste.
CO5.6	Economic growth is in keeping with the special character and environment of the District.

*Code refers to a unique identifier for South Waikato's Community Outcomes. For further information refer to Council's Long Term Plan 2006-16 or visit Council's website www.southwaikato.govt.nz/community-outcomes.

Indicators provide a simplistic framework for displaying environmental information, providing Council with a yardstick for measuring the success of existing policy and plans. The information for each indicator shows:

- Pressures that are affecting/influencing the community's current and future environmental quality.
- The state or condition of the environment.
- Council's and the Community's response to the environmental issue/problem.

Where there is a lack of available data, trends are harder to establish, therefore limiting Council's and the community's response. The SOE Report is produced every three years to establish long-term trends.

Statutory Obligations

Council is required by Section 35(2a) of the RMA to monitor the effectiveness of its District Plan. Council can use the information presented in each environmental indicator to challenge the effectiveness of relevant parts of its Operative District Plan, the Long Term Plan and other Policies.

Benefits

The primary benefit of a SOE Report is that it includes the monitoring required by the various Plans and Policies into a single report. It provides data that can be used to:

- Identify environmental issues.
- Measure the effect of existing policies.
- Derive options for the future policy development.